

Power Calls Alert SAC 'Only Way'

By John G. Norris
Staff Reporter

Gen. Thomas S. Power said yesterday that there can be "little doubt" but that Russia is producing missiles at the "high rate" it claims and in two years conceivably could have enough to deliver a "massive" attack on the United States.

The only way that American retaliatory forces then can be certain of surviving such a surprise assault, said the chief of the Strategic Air Command, is to establish an airborne alert of SAC bombers and keep it continuously aloft at all times.

"I am confident that the Soviets will be strongly deterred from risking an attack on this country as long as they know that they cannot destroy the alert force nor prevent it from retaliating decisively," Power told the American Legion's National Security Commission here.

Less Optimistic

Power's speech, cleared by the Defense Department, presented a much less optimistic picture of relative Soviet-American strategic power than have President Eisenhower, Defense Secretary Thomas S. Gates, Jr., and other Administration officials in recent days.

By the time Russia may be able to threaten the United States with destruction two years hence, he said, this country will have "no active defense whatsoever against their ballistic missiles." And while an "interim" missile warning capability will be operating by then, he added it will not be sufficiently ready to assure that SAC's force will not "be destroyed on the ground."

Power said that fortunately the problem of the survivability of ~~part of SAC can be~~ solved, "at least partially" by an air alert. Tests have shown such a plan to be feasible and "with adequate preparation and support" can be started when needed.

White Backs Alert

During the day, Gen. Thomas D. White, Air Force Chief of Staff, and Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, also stressed the need for a SAC airborne alert. White told the Committee that it constituted "the only sure protection against an ICBM surprise attack."

Speaking before the Legion group, Jackson said that keeping a "substantial" part of SAC in the air would cost \$1 billion the first year of operation. This would keep almost 100 of SAC's nearly 500 B-52s continuously in the air, the Air Force estimates.

In his Budget message, President Eisenhower asked \$90 million to start additional training of SAC crews and to buy extra B-52 engines and parts so such an alert could be started when needed. He said an air alert was neither practical nor desirable now and when ordered, should be carried on only for "reasonable periods of time until an emergency situation clarified."

Disagrees on B-70s

The SAC commander stressed the importance of manned aircraft as future strategic weapons and disagreed with Administration chiefs in urging "expeditious" development of the B-70 bomber. He also took a different stand than President Eisenhower on the importance of space exploration. Power said it was "more than a race for scientific firsts and national prestige . . . (It is) a question of survival."

Power did not say yesterday how many missiles he expected Russia to have. But in his speech in New York Jan. 19, he declared that under present conditions, the U.S.S.R. would have to have only 300 missiles—half ICBMs and half IRBMs—to "virtually wipe out our entire nuclear strike capability" scattered over about one hundred bases.

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